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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Wednesday, March 13, 1935.

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Hello folks. I am reminded that this is the 13th. Well, I'm not superstitious, not even about the 13th or the moon. Speaking of the moon reminds me that I am receiving a number of letters asking if there really is anything in that old idea about planting certain crops, putting on roofs, building fences or killing hogs in the light or the dark of the moon.

The results of scientific studies fail to show that the moon has any appreciable effect on temperature, rainfall or any other weather element and it is mainly the weather including sunlight, temperature, moisture and plant food both in the soil and the air that makes plants grow. The moon neither mellows the ground or fertilizes it, neither does it alter the composition of the atmosphere. If the moon had any influence it would be from the standpoint of light. Full daylight is about 600,000 times brighter than full moonlight and if you cut out 99 percent of full daylight plants make no more growth than in total darkness and the remaining 1 percent of daylight is still 6,000 times as strong as full moonlight. So it would appear that the light of the moon could not have any effect on plant growth.

Personally I am more concerned about getting my soil in the best possible condition before planting than letting the ground become warm enough so that the seeds will come quickly. I am also very particular about the kind of seeds I plant. I want the best seeds I can get. The first cost of the seeds is small as compared with the labor, fertilizers and other expenses connected with the growing of any crop. It happens that several kinds of garden seeds are short this year and the prices correspondingly high so there may be a temptation on the part of some growers to try to economize by planting cheaper seed stocks. Take it from me folks it will not pay in the long run and I for one prefer one quart of true pedigreed Golden Cross Bantam seed corn to a gallon of unselected poor strain Golden Bantam seed for planting in my garden.

The market gardener who tried to economize by planting poor, cheap seeds is the one who is usually complaining about a poor market for his produce. You don't hear many complaints from the growers who are producing quality goods. Price is not always a true index to the quality of garden seeds and good seeds are not of a necessity high in price except in cases like the cross-bred corns where special means have been employed in the production of the seed. Where any seed crop is short the prices are naturally above normal but as a rule there are enough seeds for all practical purposes, and the growers safeguard is to buy his supply of garden seeds from a seed dealer with whom he is acquainted and who has a reputation to sustain. No reputable seed dealer, and the majority of them are reputable, would knowingly supply his customers with inferior seeds, at least he could not hope to remain in business if he did so.

Speaking of good seeds I want to remind you that the genuine, northern grown certified seed potatoes are costing only a fraction of a cent a pound above the price of commercial table potatoes, and in view of the fact that the

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use of the certified seed gives a considerable increase in yield also potatoes that are cleaner and free from virus diseases, it certainly pays to plant the certified seed, but be sure you are getting the genuine with the State certification tag right on the bags the potatoes are shipped in. Don't let some unscrupulous dealer sell you something marked certified potatoes which may mean anything under the sun, but insist on seeing the certification tag signed by some authentic State agency of the State in which the seed potatoes were grown. This may be the State Department of Agriculture, the State Plant Board, the State Seed Improvement Association, but always by an accredited State agency.

Onion sets are another much-used garden commodity that is high in price this season. This is due to crop shortage on account of the drought in certain of the set-growing sections last season. In other sections where the rainfall was about normal there was a good crop of sets and the growers made a cleanup, but lookout for everybody will be planting sets this season and the price is liable to hit the bottom. Peas are high this year due to the drought in the northern Great Plains and Inter Mountain States last season. A lot of folks are writing to us and asking about growing horseradish because the present prices of horseradish for grating is very high. About 60 percent of our supply of horseradish is grown in the region around St. Louis, Mo. and the drought hit that section last season. I would not advise anybody to take a flyer on horseradish this season just because the price was good last season.

In conclusion and summing up what I have said in this little garden broadcast today, I want to caution all of you to follow the safe and sane lines of vegetable and fruit production and be mighty sure of your market before you invest too heavily, and above all don't be led astray by some of the prices that have been paid for certain short-crop commodities during this winter. In nearly every case the drought in the middle west was the cause and nature seldom repeats. Better stick to the good old true and tried lines of production and let the other fellow do the wild-cating. You'll make no mistake, however, in using good seeds, and if you are in doubt about anything you are contemplating in the gardening line consult your county agricultural agent or drop us a line.